

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NEW PROPOSED INJURIOUS WILDLIFE REGULATIONS

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published proposed wildlife importation regulations in the Federal Register on March 7 which would streamline and clarify the present regulations governing injurious wildlife.

The proposal also would add a number of forms of fish and wildlife to the present list of injurious wildlife that may be imported only under permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior for scientific, educational, zoological, or medical purposes.

Public comments are invited through May 6, 1977. Comments should be addressed to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The Service proposes to add a number of additional high risk species to the 1900 Lacey Act restrictions on wildlife imports without otherwise changing the concept of the present regulations. These new proposed regulations will result in increased protection to human beings, to the interest of agriculture, horticulture, forestry, wildlife or to the wildlife resources of the United States. A number of venomous snakes, sting-rays, piranhas, vampire bats and the like are included on the new list.

The proposed regulations do not involve a complete ban or prohibition on the importation of any species. However, they attempt to insure that creatures which pose a threat are imported only by responsible people for justifiable purposes.

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Economically, on a national basis, the overall effect of these proposed regulations is expected to be insignificant. These regulations, if implemented as proposed, would affect those people who have previously imported species of wildlife on the so-called "dirty list" for purposes for which permits cannot be issued.

The proposal would add the following species to the existing list of injurious wildlife for the reasons assigned:

Vampire bats feed only on fresh blood lapped from wounds inflicted on warm-blooded vertebrates including domestic mammals and man. They are carriers and transmitters of rabies.

Ferrets, stoats, and weasels have been destructive to native wildlife where they have been introduced deliberately or accidentally.

Bulbuls are gregarious birds that feed on fruit, berries, and insects. Two species are established in the United States, and other species could become established.

Starlings and mynahs listed in the proposal are gregarious, aggressive, and omnivorous. Species of these birds have demonstrated an ease of colonization and have been introduced widely throughout the world. Four species are established in the United States and Canada.

The Japanese white-eye--a small bird--is established in Hawaii, where it appears to compete with native species for food. It readily colonizes new habitats and would compete with many continental species if established.

The African clawed frog, established in southern California, feeds on almost all other forms of aquatic animals, and not only competes with but preys on native amphibians.

The giant toad, already established in the United States, competes with and preys on other wildlife species.

All the snakes listed, such as pit vipers and cobras, are venomous and can inflict serious, even fatal, bites on humans. Some species listed are frequently imported and may be sold to persons unaware of the danger involved.

There are 50 species of fish included on the list. They are either parasitic, venomous, electric, large aggressive predators, or superior competitors and would be detrimental if introduced into U.S. waters. There are presently no known safe and efficient means for control of these fish if they become established.